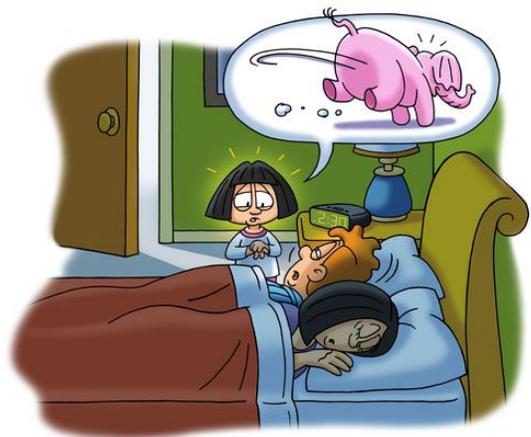


Nighttime Waking

So your five-year-old daughter appears at your bedside at 2:30 in the morning. When you ask her what's the matter, she looks sleepy and confused and she responds, "The elephant ran away!" Since you're not quite in your right mind either, you answer back, "Well, where did he go?" What do we have here? We have a crazy conversation in the middle of the night.

Here's the thing about nighttime waking: It's perfectly normal. It is not usually a sign of emotional disturbance. Sometimes a storm or a bona fide nightmare will wake your child. Most of the time, however, a child wakes up because she has to go to the bathroom. She may wake up but not be able to verbalize her discomfort to you because she's still half asleep. Lots of people, children as well as adults, have both goofy dreams as well as goofy thoughts at night because of discomfort from bladder pressure.

So what are you going to do if your youngster appears at your bedside in the middle of the night mumbling incoherently? This is an interesting situation because it's one in which certain people, especially the males of the species, could win academy awards for sleeping performances! The body rolls over, the snoring deepens, and the message is "Honey, you're on your own."



Here are the rules for handling nighttime waking successfully.

First, someone is probably going to have to get up because you are going to assume the child has to go to the bathroom.

Second, no talking and no emotion. Be gentle and very comforting, but don't discuss anything. That only wakes everyone—including you—up more.

Third, no lights! Stagger through the dark and guide the child to the bathroom. Do not turn on the bathroom light (a permanent nightlight in the bathroom may help, though). Give the little one whatever help they need to urinate. Help them clean up. Then it's back to their bedroom.

Tuck them in, kiss them goodnight, try to get out of the room. Now, potentially, comes the really-not-very-fun part. If the child goes right to sleep, great. If they get scared or protest when you try to leave, sit by the bed until your kiddo goes to sleep. If you argue or otherwise complain, you'll both become fully awake and no one will go back to sleep for an hour!

With the families with whom we've worked, the record for the most times getting up during by one child the night is seventeen. The record for the longest time required to get a child to sleep through the night—using the method described here—is about two months. Most kids will be a lot easier!

What is the quickest and easiest way to learn a warm and demanding parenting approach?

The program, [1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children](#), embodies what warm and demanding parenting is all about. 1-2-3 Magic's three parenting steps, *Controlling Obnoxious Behavior*, *Encouraging Good Behavior*, and *Strengthening Your Relationship With Your Child*, require that parents be supportive and nurturing while at the same time they are expecting constructive behavior as well as hard work from their kids.